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Per DOS Review 3/23/98

By BM/SLS. LC Date: 7/31/98

EYES ONLY SECRETARY AND AMBASSADORS

Following based on uncleared memcon.

Dept called in Soviet Amb. Dobrynin to see Acting Secy and Harriman on Laos. We reiterated points made by Roberts and Thompson to Gromyko that:

1. Attack on Nam Tha serious breach of cease-fire;

2. If Souphanouvong is hoping bring pressure on Phoumi to negotiate by this means he making grave mistake since no possibility RLG will negotiate under direct military pressure;

3. After Secy talked with Gromyko in Geneva US had pressured Phoumi very strongly to join in responsible discussions with other Lao factions on govt. national union under Souvanna. We were supported in this by British, French and Thais and encouraged think realistic negotiations likely resume;

4, Thompson had requested Gromyko x use his influence with PL and DRV to obtain evacuation of Nam Tha and its return to RLG.

We then covered points conveyed in Vientiane's 1503 to

Drafted by: SEA:CTCross:smf 5/9/62

Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: FE - Edward E. Rice

Clearances:
FE - Mr. Harriman (subs.)
SOV - Mr. Guthrie (draft)
SEA - Mr. Koren
S/S - Mr. Little
White House - Mr. Smith

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Dept and commented that in view of these statements by Souphanouvong, attack on Nam Tha was very great shock to us. It most unfortunate attack took place just when US pressures beginning bear fruit. As Harriman had informed Dobrynin on May 4 encouraging progress was being made in reestablishing meaningful discussion between Phoumi and Souvanna. Outlook then appeared to be favorable for resumption of talks between 3 Princes and early agreement on establishment of ~~xxxxx~~ govt. national union.

We had believed as result of Khrushchev talks with President, Gromyko statements to Secy at Geneva, and many talks between Pushkin and Harriman that Soviets wishes achieve common objective of independent neutral Laos. We now wish know whether Soviet position has changed. US policy and actions in future will be seriously influenced by attitude of Soviet Union. Much depends on what Soviet Union does and whether Soviets will reaffirm by words and actions their understandings with us regarding Laos. US has been putting pressure on Phoumi and it is now expected that Soviet Union will exercise control of reckless actions of Souphanouvong.

We added that Soviets have always supported Souvanna in civil war. Now Souvanna has disclaimed responsibility for these attacks and that his forces not involved; and we believe him. This was straight PL/VM attack and no longer civil war but Communist invasion.

Dobrynin replied:

1. There is no change in Soviet position as set forth by Khrushchev in Vienna; Soviets will stick to agreements reached at

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Geneva; Soviets have always worked for agreement in good faith and still believed agreement is possible.

2. Dobrynin had no detailed knowledge of this incident. He wondered whether attack on Nam Tha might be result stubborn build-up of Phoumi forces; after all cease-fire in effect and what need for these forces. (He was told PL had no business where they were; fact Nam Tha fell in short period proves no real build-up; Nam Tha threatened for long time; RLG obviously defending themselves; moreover attack well-organized and planned; harassing actions are continuing which give evidence PL intending take control entire province).

3. Soviets have been discouraged by lack progress in formation of govt. national union after long conference at Geneva settlement almost at hand but now still no govt. formed. (We noted that in talks with Pushkin in Dec. and Jan. we said that in order bring pressure to bear on Phoumi we might have to withdraw military assistance. However, before we would do so we would need assurances from Soviet side that they would not take military advantage this situation. We never received assurances so we could not withdraw assistance and Nam Tha shows we correct in our assumption. Recent Phoumi/Souvanna secret exchange very encouraging.)

We concluded with statement that President wishes go ahead with negotiated settlement for an independent and neutral Laos and effect of belated attack on Nam Tha makes it extremely difficult.

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We expressed ~~xxx~~ hope of US Govt that co-chairmen will reestablish cease-fire and would like obtain ~~formi~~ formal assurances from Soviets re their intentions.

Dobrynin promised report our demarche promptly.

END

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